ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE: A STUDY IN STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE: A STUDY IN STRATEGIC LEVEL LEADERSHIP, by LCDR Daniel A. Shaarda, USN, 76 pages.

In a surprise move during the summer of 1955 the Secretary of the Navy selected Rear Admiral Arleigh Burke over 92 more senior admirals to become the Navy's next Chief of Naval Operations. The junior admiral went on to serve an unprecedented three terms as the Navy's principal leader, a record yet to be broken. With no formal leadership instruction aside from his Naval Academy days and abbreviated experience at the senior operational level, Burke nonetheless became a prolific strategic level leader. At the height of the Cold War Burke led the Navy through a transition in technology, moving from an era of bullets and propellers to one of guided missiles and jets. Under his watch nuclear propulsion became the standard for all US submarines while the Navy greatly enhanced its contribution to the nation's strategic nuclear capability with nuclear missile submarines. In driving these transitions Burke left his mark on Navy culture and morale, shaking the service out of the doldrums and reinvigorating it. Today's military leaders are required to deal with a large degree of ambiguity. Understanding how previous leaders dealt with complex issues may help current and future leaders understand how to deal with difficult issues effectively. It may also help leaders understand circumstances as they exist today by examining the visions and decisions of strategic leaders in the past.

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ACRONYMS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
FM	Field Manual
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
OP-23	Organizational Research and Policy Division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
US	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States (US) military underwent dramatic changes in vision and direction in the aftermath of the Second World War as the Army, Army Air Forces, Navy, and Marine Corps labored terrifically to define their respective roles in a world recently liberated. Issues that faced the services were significant, and the results from dealing with those issues are still being felt in the services today. A dramatic postwar drawdown of forces occurred while a new potential threat emerged from the Soviet Union. Heated debate followed over atomic weapons and national military strategy, as well as how these weapons should be employed. Bitter interservice rivalries also occurred over the structure of the national military establishment. These issues remained central to the services for decades as the US and Soviet Union moved from world war into the Cold War.

One prolific naval leader that dealt with these issues through the development and into the height of the Cold War was Arleigh A. Burke. Famous for his Second World War exploits on destroyers he reached the pinnacle of naval leadership as Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) from 1955 to 1961. In an era when the expected length of service in that position was two years he served an unprecedented six years. An evaluation of his strategic leadership during his tenure as CNO is the primary purpose of this writing. To execute this evaluation properly it is necessary to understand the central issues affecting the general military environment in the years following the Second World War and preceding his time as CNO.

While Captain Burke went to work at the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance after the Japanese surrender, primary on the list for American political leaders following the war was to "get the troops home" and try to get back to the American way of life. From the perspective of the military, vast numbers of service members were to be discharged and future force structure needed to be ascertained. Thus, the most powerful military organizations ever fielded by the US were rapidly and dramatically disassembled in the euphoria of victory and complete national weariness that resulted from three and a half years of desperate conflict. In his book *The Uncertain Trumpet*, General Maxwell D. Taylor, Army Chief of Staff from 1955 to 1959, went so far as to comment this drawdown occurred "thoroughly and wastefully at the end of World War II in the furor to 'bring the boys home'."[1] With the Axis powers defeated and a nation ready for peace, it was difficult for US military and political leaders to determine how much conventional military strength needed to be retained.

Interrelated to the first issue was that of threat assessment. What threat to US interests existed in the postwar world? The only major military powers still standing postconflict were members of the Allied powers. During the latter stages of World War II, however, US government leaders began to question Soviet postwar objectives. Soviet attitudes toward Britain and the US became more hostile while at the same time it appeared the Soviets might use the defeat of the Axis powers to expand their own territories. By the end of the year the Soviet Union was actively pressuring Turkey for territorial concessions, as well as effecting the formation of two breakaway provinces from the northern region of Iran. Western Europe and the US faced the prospect that the

Soviets may take advantage of the war's devastation to forcefully expand westward, perhaps even in an attempt to seize all of Western Europe.[2]

By the end of the year, moreover, conventional US forces had been drastically liquidated while in the Soviet Union, "if one accepted Russian statements about its demobilization, there would still be 5.5 million men under arms after 1 January 1946."[3] This quandary shifted the focus of US military contingency planning at the highest levels toward the emergent threat of Soviet intentions and military might. A press was made to define what forces and methods could be used to deter the hazard and, if necessary, defeat it. As part of this movement to address the emerging Soviet threat Burke was assigned to help hastily stand up a new, permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean Sea--the US Navy's 8th Fleet. The US government hoped the presence of naval forces in the area would help deter any potential further Soviet aggression against Turkey and Western Europe.

Meanwhile interest quickly centered on the use of atomic weapons. Nuclear weapons, which possessed incredible amounts of destructive power in a single package and over which the US at the time had a monopoly, were heralded as the deterrent to any future aggression against US interests. This new superweapon appeared to be a panacea to the problem of maintaining large, expensive conventional forces and was expected to play an important role in any future, major conflict in which the US might be involved. The perception that atomic bombs caused Japan to capitulate to end the war seemed to support that theory.[4] Afterward, this exotic ordnance rapidly gravitated toward the centerpiece of the national military strategy of the US. General Taylor describes this process as "the fascination of the Great Fallacy, that henceforth the use or the threatened

use of atomic weapons of mass destruction would be sufficient to assure the security of the United States and its friends."[5] This perspective is important in light of the predicament in which the US found itself. On the one hand the US seriously reduced its forces in anticipation of a transition to global peace. Conversely, the country found itself faced with a rapidly emerging threat it no longer had sufficient conventional forces with which to deal. Moreover, "to have rebuilt similar forces [to those at the end of the war] in the succeeding years would have been costly both in dollars and in political 'face'" and that it "would have been a tacit admission of lack of foresight."[6] The issue thus became one of money and politics for the presidential administration.

Harry S. Truman, President of the United States for nearly eight years immediately following the war, firmly believed that America's economy was a central part of her strength.[7] The huge amount of money spent on the war was a significant drain on the economy and when the war was over, it seemed logical to greatly reduce this amount in order to strengthen the economy. Concurrent with the shrinking postwar defense budget were the increasing security commitments faced by the services in dealing with the growing threat of the Soviet Union. So strong was Truman's belief in fiscal solvency that it took precedence over military concerns in dealing with the communist Soviet threat. General Omar Bradley, Chief of Staff of the Army from 1948 to 1949, described the situation this way: "The fundamental dichotomy in our Cold War 'containment' policy persisted: Truman was determined to do his utmost to stop the worldwide march of communism, but he was unwilling to spend money on a powerful military establishment to enforce the policy. He continued to believe that a sound national

economy was more vital than any other factor."[8] A strong American economy was essential in the effort to contain communism in the long haul.

There was also the very real concern of rampant inflation in the transition to a postwar economy and spending large amounts of money on the military could exacerbate the situation. Based on economic experiences following the First World War and the Great Depression preceding the Second World War, there was significant precedent for such concern. General Taylor believed:

> Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that the idea of relying on nuclear weapons and strategic bombing for national defense had great appeal. Such a military program appeared to offer us a way out of fighting dirty, costly wars with Communist masses on the ground. It was a way to meet manpower with mechanical power. Its apparent cheapness gave rise to the slogan, "More bang for a buck." But this reliance on Massive Retaliation overlooked the fact that atomic bangs could eventually be bought for rubles as well as dollars.[9]

Another perspective held by many senior military leaders served to reinforce the viewpoint that atomic weapons were the only feasible way to address the threat: "neither we nor the prostrate nations of Western Europe could match Russia's massive land army man-for-man and tank-for-tank on D-Day without total peacetime mobilization, which was patently out of the question. Given the military spending limits, we were forced to rely principally on our atomic monopoly."[10] Clearly atomic weapons, which promised relatively inexpensive destructive power, were there to stay. Yet to be determined was which services would primarily or exclusively employ them.

When the Army Air Forces gained independent service status as the Air Force in July of 1947, it was the culmination of efforts on the part of independent air force partisans that began in the 1920s. With its roots in the influential writings of Italy's General Giulio Douhet, the movement towards independence reached a crescendo near

the end and immediately after the Second World War. Army Air Force leaders believed their efforts in the war demonstrated the need for an independent air service and they attempted to capitalize on popular public and congressional support to gain that status.[11]

Simultaneous with Army Air Force efforts to garner support for independence was the momentum in government circles toward unification of the armed services under a single national defense department instead of the two existing departments, War and Navy. The Army, a main proponent of unification, viewed the existing Joint Chiefs of Staff "committee" system as cumbersome and inefficient for the manner in which it operated. The Army also feared "that their ground forces might well lose out in the postwar competition for funds to the more glamorous Air Force and Navy, if a single department were not present to allocate the monies Congress provided in a rational manner."[12]

The Army Air Forces, meanwhile, "saw support for a single department as the means to its separation from the Army and its acquisition of a coequal position with the Army and the Navy."[13] Navy leaders strongly opposed any such unification efforts on the grounds that the Joint Chiefs of Staff system in place was optimum and that a single military decision maker would be disadvantageous to the manner in which the Navy operated.[14]

The biggest concern between the Air Force and Navy over unification, however, regarded the fate of airpower. The Navy was afraid it would lose control of its aviation under the unified system with an independent Air Force. Burke himself, then assigned to the Navy's prestigious General Board, wrote a memo during this period in which he attributed the declining morale of Navy officers to the battle over unification and

potential loss of Naval Aviation. Ironically the Army Air Force leaders were concerned that the Navy would absorb its roles if the air forces could not achieve independent status. After many months of heated debate the Navy eventually conceded and agreed to support unification measures under assurances that the Air Force would not take control of Naval Aviation.[15] Though the Air Force succeeded in its quest, the combative nature of the relationship between the two services remained firmly entrenched and frequently flared in subsequent months.

As Burke continued his work on the General Board, the subject of control over and access to nuclear weapons was an additional area that caused intense conflict between the Navy and Air Force. The Air Force clearly believed it should be the sole employer of atomic weapons and, in light of the fact that any potential armed conflict with the Soviet Union was destined to be predominantly over land, believed the Navy's involvement in such a conflict would be minimal. The Air Force further believed itself to be the new dominant service in the national defense. That the Navy took exception to this is no surprise. It firmly believed a more balanced array of military forces, including Navy access to nuclear weapons, was necessary to combat the Soviet threat. Navy leaders also had significant reservations about Air Force ability to successfully prosecute a general war with the Soviets. The difference between the opposing viewpoints stemmed from a central divergence in doctrinal beliefs. The Air Force subscribed to strategic bombardment and the notion that the heavy bomber, if employed correctly, would always accomplish the mission. The Navy put its faith in a balanced force in the form of aircraft carriers and the ability to control the seas.[16] Each service was convinced it was right. Each service believed it should receive the preponderance of defense funds. This mutual

opposition grew deep roots and remained a point of contention through the next decade and beyond. It required military leaders with wisdom, courage, vision, and stamina to pilot their respective service through those tumultuous years.

In this environment the career of Arleigh Burke matured, culminating in his selection as Chief of Naval Operations in 1955. From the months after the Japanese surrendered through his retirement from CNO in 1961, Admiral Burke influenced and guided the Navy through remarkable changes during the earliest years of this new world order. It was a world marked by interservice rivalries, proliferation of communism, and emergence of nuclear strategy. Through persuasive written arguments, a vision to make the Navy as strong as it could become, and a strong desire to provide for the protection of the country that he served, Admiral Burke applied the influential leadership principles he developed during his career to carry out his service to the nation to the best of his ability.

In doing so, he instilled a strong sense of pride and confidence in the naval service that had suffered since its heyday in the Pacific in 1945. He orchestrated the move to an all-nuclear powered submarine fleet and sought to transition surface combatant ships to nuclear propulsion as well, including aircraft carriers. He directed the development and employment of new technology and weapons systems, most dramatically a naval intermediate-range ballistic missile system eventually named Polaris. This weapon, which could carry an atomic warhead and be employed by a submerged submarine, significantly enhanced the nuclear capabilities possessed by the US. He also continued to fight movements within the Department of Defense to centralize individual service operational authority under the Secretary of Defense. Finally, by emphasizing public relations and the need to communicate the Navy's ideas effectively, he groomed senior

Navy leadership to be politically astute and savvy. This allowed them to effectively represent the Navy's interests and objectives to the public and Congress in an era of shrinking defense budgets but growing security concerns.

Admiral Burke's leadership challenges during his tour as CNO will be evaluated using the framework of fundamental leadership principles put forth in the Army's Field Manual 22-100 (FM 22-100), entitled *Army Leadership*. The principal subject is addressed in three parts, depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1. The Army Leadership Framework

Source: Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington: Army Press, 1999), 1-3.

Part one of FM 22-100 provides the Army's definition of leadership, defines three distinct levels of leadership, and identifies core Army values. It also explains essential leader attributes as they apply to Army personnel and broadly categorizes leadership into what a leader must "Be, Know, and Do."[17]

Of the three overall levels of leadership put forth by the Army, part two in FM 22-100 addresses the first level, Direct Leadership. This level applies to any individual with any type of leadership role in the Army. Part two of FM 22-100 explains in detail the skills, what a leader must "Know," and actions, what a leader must "Do," required to be successful at the direct leadership level in the eyes of the Army.[18]

FM 22-100 part three addresses skills and actions required at the second level, Organizational Leadership, encountered as individuals mature and promote to higher levels of responsibilities within a unit, such as an Army brigade. This part also deals with those skills and actions essential at the highest level, Strategic Leadership. Strategic leaders are those operating at the highest levels in the Army or Department of Defense, such as Chief of Staff of the Army or Chief of Naval Operations.[19] The three levels and how they fit together are represented graphically in figure 2. The skills and actions of Admiral Burke as they pertain to the strategic level are the focus of this thesis.

Figure 2. Army Leadership Levels

Source: Department of the Army, *Field Manual* 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington: Army Press, 1999), 1-10.

The Army's leadership framework is used to critically look at Admiral Burke for several reasons. First, FM 22-100 offers a thorough, clear, and easily understood structure. No other service doctrine distinguishes three levels of leadership in this manner. It also offers a perspective from outside the Navy environment and so is removed from possible pro-Navy bias that might be present if a Navy framework was used. Finally, as a student at the Army's Command and General Staff Officer College the author is familiar with its content through coursework and study and *Army Leadership* is readily accepted in this environment.

Now that the framework for evaluating Burke's leadership principles has been set forth, it is necessary to examine the strategic leadership principles found in *Army Leadership* in more detail. Subsequent chapters consider Burke's significant career

experiences prior to assuming the title of Chief of Naval Operations, his first term, and then his second and third terms together. The final chapter consists of conclusions reached from evaluating his leadership principles within the framework of FM 22-100, as applied to significant issues faced while CNO. Ultimately, this evaluation may prove useful to readers in providing an additional avenue for understanding Burke's overall contributions to the Navy. Hopefully it will also provide a learning tool to broaden understanding on how better to achieve success as a leader at the strategic level.

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[1]Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 13.

[2]Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950* (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1994), 81-82.

[3]Ibid., 82.

[4]David A. Adams, "Win without Fighting," *Proceedings*, September 2000, 55.

[5]Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, 4.

[6]Ibid., 13.

[7]Ibid., 12.

[8]Omar N. Bradley, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 487.

[9]Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, 13.

[10]Bradley, *A General's Life*, 490.

[11]Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals*, 30.

[12]Demetrios Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification: A Study of Conflict and the Policy Process* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 62; quoted in Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals*, 30.

[13]Caraley, *Politics of Military Unification*, 73; quoted in Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals*, 30.

[14]Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals*, 30.

[15]Ibid., 42.

[16]Ibid., 3-13.

[17]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington: Army Press, 1999), 1-2.

[18]Ibid., 4-2.

[19]Ibid., 7-1.

CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIC LEVEL LEADERSHIP

This chapter addresses in detail the strategic level skills and actions from *Army Leadership* that are used to evaluate Admiral Burke. Leaders at the strategic level have significant hurdles to cross and require unusually sophisticated sets of skills to be effective. These skill sets are developed from those learned at the direct and organizational levels of leadership, but are unique in that they must be matured to such a high degree. Of these skills not every leader is likely to develop each equally well, but instead is likely to be stronger in some and weaker in others. Burke was no exception. What is exceptional about the situation in which Burke found himself is that he was forced to mature his skills to the strategic level much more quickly than expected.

General of the Army George C. Marshall, who became Army Chief of Staff in 1939, once commented on his leadership role at the strategic level:

> It became clear to me that at the age of 58 I would have to learn new tricks that were not taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield. In this position I am a political soldier and will have to put my training in rapping-out orders and making snap decisions on the back burner, and have to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills.[1]

These new skills were required because:

> Strategic leaders think in multiple time domains and operate flexibly to manage change. Moreover, strategic leaders often interact with other leaders over whom they have minimal authority.
>
> Strategic leaders are not only experts in their own domain--warfighting and leading large military organizations--but also are astute in the departmental and political environments of the nation's decision-making process. They're expected to deal competently with the public sector, the executive branch, and the legislature. The complex national security environment requires an in-depth knowledge of the political, economic, informational, and military elements of national power as well as the interrelationship among them. In short, strategic

> leaders not only know themselves and their own organizations but also understand a host of different players, rules, and conditions.[2]

FM 22-100 Chapter Seven, epntitled “Strategic Leadership,” clearly outlines and explains three types of skills that a leader at the strategic level must master to be effective. The three types of skills are Interpersonal, Conceptual, and Technical. Interpersonal skills include communicating, using dialogue, negotiating, achieving consensus, and building staffs. Conceptual skills comprise envisioning, developing frames of reference, and dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity. The requisite technical skills consist of strategic art, leveraging technology, and translating political goals into military objectives.[3]

Ideally, each of these skill sets builds on those skills achieved at the direct and operational level to achieve a highly developed and advanced set of skills capable of operating in the complex environment of the strategic level leader. Highly developed interpersonal skills are required because the strategic level requires more levels of people be dealt with, both inside the organization but especially outside the organization where the leader has no direct authority.[4] Strategic leaders also need enhanced conceptual skills to “comprehend national, national security, and theater strategies, operate in the strategic and theater contexts, and improve their vast, complex organizations. The variety and scope of their concerns demand the application of more sophisticated concepts.”[5]

Perhaps the greatest leap for a strategic leader, however, is the ability to master the technical skills required at that level. Strategic leaders must learn strategic art, the “skillful formulation, coordination, and application of ends, ways, and means to promote and defend the national interest.” This includes the ability to “translate abstract concepts into concrete actions” as well as “reconciling political and economic constraints with the

[service's] needs."[6] Leveraging technology to achieve advantages, in particular envisioning the potential advantages of emerging technology and determining which should be pursued, is also critical to the strategic leader. Finally, according to FM 22-100:

> Strategic leaders identify military conditions necessary to satisfy political ends desired by America's civilian leadership. They must synchronize the efforts of the [individual service] with those of the other services and government agencies to attain those conditions and achieve the end state envisioned by America's political leaders. To operate on the world stage, often in conjunction with allies, strategic leaders call on their international perspective and relationships with policymakers in other countries.[7]

Not limited to simply defining the highly developed skills a military leader at the strategic level needs, chapter seven of FM 22-100 further puts forth specific types of actions essential to such a leader's effectiveness. Organized into three groups the first of these, "influencing actions," involves communicating, decision-making, and motivating.[8] Influencing actions are crucial because frequently positional authority does not exist when dealing with joint or interagency issues so strategic leaders must influence events and individuals to achieve desired results. General of the Army Marshall, in reference to dealing with Congress, "understood that getting what he wanted meant asking, not demanding. His humble and respectful approach with lawmakers won his troops what they needed; arrogant demands would have never worked."[9]

The second group of necessary actions, "operating actions," includes strategic planning, executing, and strategic assessing. For strategic leaders, "planning, preparing, executing, and assessing are nearly continuous, more so than at the other leadership levels, because the larger organizations they lead have continuing missions."[10] This continuous process requires good staffs and subordinates to ensure plans are carried out

to the leader's intent and proper feedback is garnered for assessing results. Burke had fears in this regard that it might be "harder than ever for him to find out what was going on in the lower echelons of the Navy. After all, he decided, nobody tells the CNO anything."[11]

The final set, "improving actions," consist of developing, building, and learning. These apply both to the strategic leader and from the leader's perspective in relation to subordinates and other agencies. Actions of improving encompass all efforts by strategic leaders to "leave the [service] better than they found it."[12] Though this concept is easy to voice, it is difficult to achieve and gauge in the complex world of a strategic leader:

> Improving the institution and organizations involves an ongoing tradeoff between today and tomorrow. Wisdom and a refined frame of reference are tools to understand what improvement is and what change is needed. Knowing when and what to change is a constant challenge: what traditions should remain stable, and which long-standing methods need to evolve? Strategic leaders set the conditions for long-term success of the organization by developing subordinates, leading change, building the culture and teams, and creating a learning environment.[13]

Often success or lack thereof is impossible to determine in the short term and years must pass before results of strategic vision and policies become clear. In the case of Admiral Burke, over forty years have passed since he left the office of CNO. Ample time has elapsed to determine concrete results from his efforts.

Together, the skills and actions defined in chapter seven of FM 22-100 constitute what a strategic leader must "know" and "do" to be competent. This competency is not only desirable, it is demanded and required: "America has entrusted [military leaders] with its most precious resource, its young people. What they ask in return is competent leadership."[14]

As Burke's efforts are evaluated, the reasons leadership is important to the military leader must be kept in mind. According to *Army Leadership* there are two such reasons. First, the mission to win our nation's wars rests firmly on the shoulders of military leaders. Second, the nation and subordinates of military leaders deserve nothing less than a leader's most ardent efforts to become the very best leader possible. General of the Army MacArthur addressed the importance of leadership this way:

> Your mission . . . is to win our wars. You are the ones who are trained to fight. Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory; that if you lose, the nation will be destroyed.[15]

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[1]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington: Army Press, 1999), 7-1.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 7-1 – 7-13.

[4]Ibid., 7-2.

[5]Ibid., 7-7.

[6]Ibid., 7-10.

[7]Ibid., 7-11 – 7-12.

[8]Ibid., 7-13.

[9]Ibid., 7-27.

[10]Ibid., 7-18.

[11]Ken Jones and Hubert Kelley, Jr., *Admiral Arleigh (31-Knot) Burke: The Story of a Fighting Sailor* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1962), 181.

[12]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, 7-22.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., 1-1.

[15]Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Arleigh Burke graduated from the Naval Academy in 1923, seventieth in his class of 414.[1] Following a typical junior naval officer path of experience at sea he obtained a Master of Science in Chemical Engineering degree from the University of Michigan. He may not have fully grasped the benefits of this advanced education at the time, but he certainly recognized it as a critical element in the development of a naval officer's career. From his earliest days Burke viewed advanced education as a key to promotion in the Navy. The advanced technical degree that Burke acquired served him well during his career, giving him a solid foundation for understanding and implementing new technology as it pertained to naval use. Aside from the Academy and his time at the University of Michigan, however, Burke's only other formal education throughout his career consisted of a correspondence course in strategy and tactics taken through the Naval War College. He received no formal leadership training or education other than what he received at the Academy. Burke's leadership abilities were developed and honed through practical, on-the-job experience.

Building practical experience onto his formal education Burke received several assignments that proved instrumental in his development as a leader. One of the first began in 1937 as executive officer of the destroyer *Craven*. As a young division officer fresh out of the Academy earlier in his career, he learned techniques and skills in leading enlisted sailors. As an executive officer he next had to grow into leading and directing commissioned officers. His time aboard the *Craven* broadened his understanding of leadership in significant other ways also, as it exposed him to "materiel, administration,

logistics, and, most important, a mastery of ship-handling that his concentration on technical specialties had left undeveloped."[2]

His performance aboard the *Craven* as second-in-command was significant enough to earn him an early selection for promotion and in 1939 he was assigned to his first command, the new destroyer *Mugford*. His selection is noteworthy as an indicator that he grasped essential leadership principles at a direct leadership level. In fact, he was "one of only five officers selected early to command one of the new ships instead of a World War I four-stack destroyer."[3]

As commanding officer of his own destroyer his tutelage as a leader shifted to a less immediate basis as his own commander was not physically located on the same ship. For many naval officers, command of a ship proved the limit of leadership capacity and the pinnacle of a career. Burke still had more to offer and absorbed as much as he could from his destroyer division commander. In reference to his maturing leadership philosophy and coaching received from his commander, he later reflected that he learned "that when you have got anything to do, the time to do it is right now. If you've got power, use it and use it fast, and the time to make a decision is as soon as the problem presents itself."[4] Burke later applied this philosophy in his battles against the Japanese in the Pacific, his negotiation efforts with the communists in Korean, and throughout his time in strategic level leadership positions as he executed his responsibilities. If there was a job to do, he attempted to accomplish it as soon as possible. If he had power to affect a situation, he tried to apply it quickly and aggressively. He was unremitting in efforts to deepen his understanding of a broad range of subjects that pertained to naval forces in

order to address a problem before or as it developed. These themes proved enduring as his career matured to the organizational and strategic leadership levels.

When Commander Burke found himself serving in the Pacific in 1943 he had the experience of combat in which to test his skills as a leader. First as Commodore of a four-ship destroyer division then as Commodore of the eight-ship Destroyer Squadron Twenty-Three, Burke led his units in combat against the enemy in the area of the Solomon Islands.[5] As he assessed the current destroyer tactics he realized the destroyers were not being employed to full potential. Immediately he developed and planned new tactics to employ the advantages in radar that American destroyers possessed. The crux of Burke's proposed tactics allowed the leading destroyers of a cruiser task force to engage enemy ships immediately and without the normal requisite permission from the task force commander aboard one of the cruisers, for which the destroyers were escorts. Delegating this authority to destroyer escorts was unorthodox and required significant faith in subordinates on the part of the task force commander.[6] Having persuaded his task force commander by the end of 1943 that his proposed tactics were sound, Captain Burke was able to execute and prove his new strategy over a subsequent few months with resounding success. He thus proved himself competent in conceptual, technical and tactical skills at an organizational leadership level.

Captain Burke's wartime experience did not end as a commander of destroyers. In spring of 1944 he was assigned as the chief of staff to Rear Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, Commander of Carrier Division Three, also located in the Pacific. Burke had to move from an environment where he was successful and experienced to one in which he knew very little. Burke commented in a letter to a friend that his orders "came out of the blue

and since I know nothing of carriers or planes or little of big ships any more, I am at a loss to explain them."[7] This new assignment considerably taxed his abilities and skills as he was forced to perform in a position that involved planning and coordinating operations of a large carrier task force, much different from the operational command position from which he transferred. The assignment gave Burke a wealth of experience and postwar credibility with the naval aviation community, however, which directly affected his postwar assignments. In the meantime, Admiral Mitscher was impressed by Burke's ability to adapt and his subsequent performance. In August of 1944 Mitscher recommended him for early promotion to admiral, "citing his leadership, his combat experience, and his mastery of carrier operations and naval warfare."[8] Burke's response to this recommendation provides an interesting look at his character: "Burke argued that such a promotion would not enhance his effectiveness as a commander, and thus would not be justified."[9] Though perhaps not atypical of naval leaders of his time, it is a significant mark of character nonetheless. Instead of giving in to the temptation of prestige such a promotion would include, he exhibited the truest forms of loyalty, duty, selfless service, honor, and integrity.

From a leadership perspective David Rosenberg declares:

> Burke's service in World War II prepared him for high command better than any war college could have done. He took part in tactical and strategic planning, commanded groups of ships in combat, and, as Mitscher's chief of staff, maneuvered the largest naval force in history in some of its most crucial actions. Although a surface line officer, his service with Mitscher qualified him as a member of the increasingly powerful naval aviation community. In view of his wartime performance and the fact that Mitscher considered him "the most outstanding tactician and the most experienced officer in the American fleet today," Burke was clearly marked for high command.[10]

It seems from this pointed observation that Burke had everything going for him with respect to his career in the Navy. He proved himself soundly in war and greatly broadened his understanding of the Navy and roles it could play in the nation's defense. His combat experiences in the Pacific theater provided invaluable skills and understanding that could not possibly be achieved in a classroom environment.

After the war Burke served in a number of assignments that continued to build his breadth of experience and mature his leadership abilities. As director of research at the Bureau of Ordnance for a short time, he "became familiar with the navy's early guided-missile programs, and gained access to the closely guarded secrets of the atomic bomb."[11] Next he was tasked with standing up a staff for a new fleet in the Mediterranean, in preparation for which he took a tour of that area. This tour was critical preparation as it "allowed Burke to get a firsthand look at strategic and political problems in Europe and greatly increased his awareness of the primary theater of the postwar world."[12]

In 1948 Captain Burke received orders to serve on the Navy's General Board, a position normally held by senior Admirals. The function of the Board, located in Washington, D.C., was "to advise the secretary of the navy and the chief of naval operations."[13] Although the Board's history was prestigious, its services were not called upon much during the war. Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal attempted to reinvigorate the Board's usefulness and influence by injecting it with new talent. The newly assigned Chairman "brought together a galaxy of gifted officers ranging from commander to admiral, all with combat experience, all able to develop ideas and put them clearly and convincingly into words. Such a sterling group, Burke concluded, should serve as the navy's think tank."[14]

While serving on the General Board another aspect of Burke's leadership skills reached fruition. During his slower-paced assignments since the end of the war Burke came to realize how important it was for a leader to have a broad understanding of a wide range of subjects, including "history, economics, science, politics, and international relations." To increase his knowledge in these areas he read books and articles and joined the Brookings Institution for the study of economic, governmental, and international problems. He in turn took this approach to his work and arranged various experts to brief members of the General Board to broaden their knowledge of issues affecting the Navy.[15]

Drawing on this knowledge he came to believe a study was needed which would allow the Board to determine, based on world resources and conditions, "developing world conditions to which the United States would probably have to respond, using naval forces," over the next ten years.[16] It was an ambitious, in-depth effort and he undertook much of the project personally, on top of his assigned duties, and it was completed by July of 1948. David Rosenberg, in his evaluation of Burke, comments:

> Although some of its prognostications were wide of the mark, this study was by far the most influential and realistic analysis of its kind undertaken by the navy in the early postwar period. In particular, it appears to have been a major factor in turning naval thinking away from politically attractive but strategically and operationally extravagant plans to use carrier task forces as bases for strategic nuclear attacks against Soviet urban-industrial targets. In contrast with earlier planning, it stressed that the Soviet submarine force was the most significant enemy of the US Navy, and identified destruction of Soviet submarine bases as the prime objective of the carrier task forces.[17]

In E. B. Potter's opinion:

> The most long-range effect of the Burke paper seems to have been on Burke himself and on his reputation. His year of intense study, discussion, and writing about history, economics, government, and international relations had given him a worldview much beyond that of most naval captains. From the relatively few officers who read or dipped into the paper, word got around in

naval circles that Burke was a man to watch, one destined to rise high in the navy.[18]

Continuing the strategic impact he was beginning to exert on the Navy, Burke shortly found himself assigned in December of 1948 as the head of the Navy's newly formed Organizational Research and Policy Division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (Op-23). He was picked for the job because both the surface and aviation branches of the Navy respected him.[19] It was the responsibility of this office to advise the CNO on current and potential problems of unification under the National Security Act of 1947 and other unification legislation. Enacted after two years of heated deliberations, this act created a "National Military Establishment composed of three services--the Army, the Navy and the Air Force--to be coordinated by a secretary of defense."[20] In 1948 the Secretary of Defense requested that each service submit recommendations for amendments to the act. As head of Op-23, Burke took the lead on preparing the Navy's position. Holding this position of considerable sway, he solidified his arguments concerning the drawbacks to unification in the long term and argued against amendments that would give the Secretary of Defense more power over the individual services.

The Army and Air Force not only pushed for increasing the Defense Secretary's power, they argued for a single chief of staff under the Secretary that would have final authority over the Joint Chiefs of Staff and would give the Chiefs a large staff with which to perform their work.[21] When the amendments were enacted during the summer of 1949 though, "Congress increased the powers of the secretary of defense, deprived the individual service secretaries of their cabinet status, and doubled the staff of the Joint Chiefs."[22]

Concurrent with the amendments process in 1949 to the National Security Act of 1947, frustrations on the part of senior naval leaders with the direction of the nation's defense policy began to boil over. Simplified, the Air Force envisioned a national defense policy centered on the employment of nuclear weapons through a long-range, strategic bomber, the B-36. Congress bought into this thinking and accordingly gave the Air Force a higher percentage of the defense budget than the other services. Opposing this view was the Navy's central argument that the current policy was "putting all the eggs in one basket" and needed to be diversified. It argued for the case of spreading the potential employment of nuclear weapons to the sea realm in the form of aircraft flying from new, super-size aircraft carriers. The first of these large carriers was to be the *United States*. When the production of this ship was cancelled abruptly and without warning by a new Defense Secretary, Louis Johnson, it amplified the Navy's anxiety over its declining role in defense planning and enraged its leaders.[23]

The cancellation of the *United States* caused the Navy Secretary, John L. Sullivan, to resign in protest, expressing as he left a fear common to the Navy since the initial unification battles that "this will result in a renewed effort to abolish the Marine Corps and to transfer all Naval and Marine Aviation elsewhere."[24] As if to confirm this fear, in August of that year Defense Secretary Johnson ordered reductions in carriers from eight to four and cut Marine Corps aviation squadrons from twenty-three to twelve.[25] In the opinion of General Omar Bradley, serving as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the hearings:

> [Louis Johnson] was probably the worst appointment Truman made during his presidency. In a little more than a year, he too would be gone, a victim of his own ambition. An unstinting air-power advocate, Johnson was determined first and

> foremost to remove the Navy from the strategic air mission. He could best do that by canceling the Navy's new supercarrier . . . whose keel was laid only days after Johnson took office."[26]

The combination of these events eventually led to congressional hearings in October 1949, later referred to as the "Revolt of the Admirals." Although popularly labeled as a "revolt," they were designed to discuss the issue of unification and defense strategy and allow the Navy to formally present its concerns. Burke, as the head of Op-23 and charged directly with assisting in the orchestration of the Navy's concerns throughout the months leading up to the hearings, was in the center of this political firestorm. In the end the controversy nearly ended Burke's career and had a profound impact on his outlook:

> Burke's experience in Op-23 was significant in a number of ways. On a personal level, it reinforced his feeling that his time in the navy was coming to an end and that it would be pointless to depend on the prospect of future promotions. Professionally, it provided a crash course in the politics of national defense, and convinced him that the navy had a continuing need for politically adept and knowledgeable officers at the highest levels of the service. As CNO, Burke made sure that such men were available to provide advice and to state the navy's case to Congress and the nation.[27]

A few assignments remained before Burke became CNO. One of these was as the Navy representative on the Defense Research and Development Board. It served to bring Burke up to speed with the latest technological developments in nuclear weapons, guided missile systems, and ship propulsion systems. Coming immediately on the heels of his job in Op-23, it also served as an uncontroversial and stable refuge to ride out the residual effects of the hearings.

The next major assignment that significantly affected his leadership development occurred during his time with the United Nations delegation to the truce talks in Korea. It was a life-changing encounter and deeply ingrained an impression of the manner with

which communist leaders must be dealt. While there he became immensely frustrated with the propaganda of the communist delegates and their unwillingness to budge on precursors to peace that clearly did not make sense from his military standpoint. He left the truce talks before they were resolved with deep convictions:

> The only thing the Communists pay any attention to is power. I believe that Americans have a great deal to learn, including those in the military services, in regard to this business. We now have the power. We still have to learn the next two steps, which are (1) how to use the power and (2) how to capitalize on the power. We've had power before but we don't know how to capitalize on it. We just let ourselves be talked out of the advantages we could have had. It looks like the old world is going to be in a really tough turmoil until we destroy the power of communism. [28]

Burke's convictions concerning communists were reminiscent of his philosophy from his destroyer days and would later manifest themselves in aggressive policies as CNO.

Burke's final shaping stop on the road to CNO was as the director of the Strategic Plans Division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. It was a prestigious position, albeit a brutal one. Though it "was one of the most important jobs open to a junior flag officer . . . many occupants of that post found themselves overwhelmed by the paperwork." Burke, however, "impressed both seniors and subordinates with the energy and initiative that he devoted to preparation of countless papers for consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff."[29] He was almost ready to take the Navy's helm.

Throughout his assignments over the length of his career leading up to CNO, Burke steadfastly maintained an exhausting work ethic. He used this ethic to inspire and be an example to others while at the same time using it to overcome any shortcomings he perceived in himself. He consistently sought to better his understanding of a wide range of useful subjects and a way to better prepare himself to carry out his growing responsibilities. He frequently sought people with opposing viewpoints to challenge his

own and sharpen his understanding. He used each of his assignments to grow and mature as a leader. It took all of his skills to grab the reigns of the Navy in the Office of Chief of Naval Operations, but he possessed significant shaping experience and powerful drive upon which to draw.

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[1]Ken Jones and Hubert Kelley, Jr., *Admiral Arleigh (31-Knot) Burke: The Story of a Fighting Sailor* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1962), 46.

[2]David Alan Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," in *The Chiefs of Naval Operations*, ed. Robert William Love Jr. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 267.

[3]David Alan Rosenberg, "Arleigh Burke, The Last CNO," in *Quarterdeck and Bridge, Two Centuries of American Naval Leaders*, ed. James C. Bradford (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 365.

[4]Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," 268.

[5]Jones and Kelley, *Admiral Arleigh (31-Knot) Burke*, 92.

[6]Ibid., 94-95.

[7]E. B. Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke* (New York: Random House, 1990), 110.

[8]Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," 269.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., 270.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 294.

[14]Ibid., 294, 297.

[15]Ibid., 298.

[16]Ibid., 298-299.

[17]Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," 271.

[18]Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 301.

[19]Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1994), 165.

[20]Ibid., 52.

[21]Ibid., 171.

[22]Dean C. Allard, "An Era of Transition, 1945-1953," in *In Peace and War* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 293.

[23]Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 320.

[24]Allard, "An Era of Transition," 293.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Omar N. Bradley, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 502.

[27]Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," 272.

[28]Ibid., 273.

[29]Rosenberg, "The Last CNO," 373.

CHAPTER 4

FIRST TERM

On 17 August 1955, Admiral Arleigh Albert Burke became the fifteenth Chief of Naval Operations of the United States Navy. From the close of World War II until August 1955, five consecutive Chiefs of Naval Operations served their respective single two-year terms in office and then were replaced. One of these five, Admiral Forrest Percival Sherman served from November 1949 until July 1951 when he died of a heart attack in office. Admiral Chester William Nimitz served from December 1945 until 1947 and chose to retire. None of the other three admirals were invited to serve a second term, including the two immediately preceding Admiral Burke. It was an ephemeral environment to step into as a leader.

To add to the instability, the very selection of Admiral Burke for the Navy's top uniformed post was controversial:

> Shock waves from the biggest promotional bombshell ever felt in the US Navy reverberated through the Pentagon's sacrosanct E-Ring in May 1955. The explosion was activated by Rear Admiral Arleigh Burke zooming past 92 rear admirals, vice admirals and admirals who were senior to him. It had never happened before and it might never happen again.[1]

Chief of Naval Operations was the pinnacle of the naval profession and traditionally a position assumed by a senior admiral "groomed" for the position. This deliberate break from tradition and blatant intervention on the part of the Navy Secretary stirred up a storm of controversy among the senior leaders of the Navy establishment.

The background leading to Admiral's Burke's controversial early selection to the office of Chief of Naval Operations included many factors. The Secretary of the Navy at the time, Charles S. Thomas, was determined that Burke's predecessor in the office of

CNO, Admiral Robert Carney, would not be reappointed. Thomas felt Carney did not include him in key decisions in the Navy and that the CNO was not providing information that he felt was critical to his job as Secretary. Thomas also "believed that Carney relied too much on old friends who lacked vigor and imagination and were reluctant to promote change." In Carney's place, Thomas wanted

> a CNO who would reorganize the navy and assign greater responsibility to younger officers. He wanted vigorous, inspiring leadership that would revive the navy's sagging morale and restore its vitality and enthusiasm. He wanted a CNO who would promote new technology so that the navy could keep pace with the air force in innovative weapon systems. Finally, he wanted a CNO who would work closely with the navy's secretariat.[2]

This was a tall order to fill and Burke earnestly explained several objections he had to accepting the position. They included his lack of experience, his complete support and respect for Admiral Carney, and his tendency to speak forthrightly. Burke feared part of the reason he was selected reflected a belief on the part of Secretary Thomas that Burke would be a pushover, easily controlled and manipulated by the Secretary.[3] Though the Secretary rebuffed each point in turn, Burke's objections keenly reveal his desire to be frank about the situation with his civilian leadership and set a baseline for future interaction.

Promoting a junior admiral to the Navy's top post was a calculated risk on the part of the Navy Secretary. Initial resentment and discord with the appointment among senior naval leaders was guaranteed. Not only was the appointment of such a junior admiral a slap in the face to them, it sent a clear message from the civilian leadership that the current administration was not impressed with the direction the Navy was going and a change was forthcoming. Admiral Carney was respected in the Navy and during his tenure made several noteworthy contributions to further its cause, including initial moves

toward nuclear propulsion and developments in guided missiles.[4] Though Secretary Thomas took great pains to select a candidate to replace Carney that was highly regarded by the Navy's senior leadership and had the support of both the surface and aviation communities, the potential for backlash was noteworthy. There was no guarantee senior leaders would work with the new CNO.

For his part Burke was not sure how the Navy would respond. He hoped senior leaders would eventually put aside or resolve any issues of being passed over by a significantly junior officer and rally to support him. He fostered this process by keeping Carney's entire staff initially and only replaced them as their terms expired. He also openly sought advice from his senior but suddenly subordinate fellow admirals on issues he believed critical or important.[5] By being respectful and openly seeking their counsel Burke disarmed perceptions that he thought himself superior. In essence, he approached his new responsibilities and authority with tact, demonstrating conceptual skills and influencing actions as a strategic leader.

Without tactfulness the situation had potential to degenerate into a debacle of infighting. Certainly the more senior admirals, by time in service, could resist Burke's vision and direction and make it very difficult for the new CNO to accomplish his objectives. It was very likely, after all, that Burke would only be in office for one term and therefore limited by time in his ability to set policy or affect Navy culture. After Burke's term expired an admiral traditionally considered to be next in line for the position would take Burke's place and a normal career progression would again be in place. This thought may have served to motivate the other senior admirals to cooperate and continue to do their part for the Navy. Their hope for the position was not lost as long

as they continued to do their job well. Sooner or later (likely sooner) this "experiment," even if successful, would be complete and normalcy would return.

Conversely, senior naval leaders may have realized organizational momentum was at stake and protracted dissent and resistance would only serve to weaken public, congressional, and executive faith in the Navy as an institution. The "Revolt of the Admirals," mentioned earlier, exemplified this and was still fresh in the minds of senior Navy leaders in 1955. A lack of support would also undermine morale within the service. The Navy was taking advantage of momentum in the fields of nuclear propulsion and weaponry to further its cause and mission and any visible lack of confidence in the newly appointed CNO might stall that momentum.

Whatever the reasons for and against, Burke's tact and the reputable manner in which he dealt with the Navy's senior leaders played an important part in garnering institutional support. According to Potter, Admiral Carney's prediction came true: "When [the senior admirals] got over the first shock and realized that the appointment was for the good of the navy, as loyal navy men they would rally round."[6]

Burke's early promotion created another unique obstacle in the starting block for the new chief. On top of the requirement to overcome the inevitable skepticism and resentment such a leapfrog promotion generated, Burke's truncated "grooming" process robbed him of valuable experience in the highest operational echelons of naval service. Admiral Carney had planned to promote Burke to vice admiral and place him in charge of one of the numbered fleets for additional development.[7] As it happened, at the time of his selection for CNO Burke had only served four years in operational command at sea positions.[8] This abbreviation of operational experience increased Burke's potential for

difficulties in transitioning from the organizational to the strategic level of leadership as CNO.

One interesting quandary which resulted from Burke's sensitivity toward admirals "senior" to him was his apparent difficulty deciding how to best deal with Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) during Burke's first term. Many years later Burke took part in an oral history interview covering his time as CNO. Responding to a question from the interviewer whether Admiral Radford was able to rise above the individual service in his capacity as chairman, Burke recalled:

> No. No. You talk about rising above--Admiral Radford--because he wanted to do this, he did not want to be a naval officer and stay with the Navy, so he was very careful always, if there was any doubt, the Navy lost. He was my hardest antagonist, because he was a naval officer, he knew a lot about the Navy, he thought that he knew more about it than I did . . . he would give a decision to the Air Force and the Army.[9]

Author David Rosenberg also commented on relationship between the two admirals:

> Burke's position among the Joint Chiefs of Staff was complicated by the presence of Radford as chairman. A problem arose . . . because Radford believed that he knew the needs of the navy as well as anyone and was inclined to speak for the service without consulting Burke. Although he succeeded in maintaining cordial relations with Radford, Burke was forced to insist repeatedly on his right and responsibility to be the navy's sole representative among the Joint Chiefs.[10]

Though not much else has been written addressing their relationship it appears Burke avoided publicly challenging Radford on issues in which they held opposing views.

A key issue on which they disagreed was that of service unification. President Eisenhower notes in *Mandate for Change*:

> At one time Admiral Radford had been in the forefront of the service personnel who had bitterly opposed unification of the services. There is no doubt that in 1947 his efforts had been successful in preventing the level of unification that in my opinion was practical and desirable, but it was clearly brought out in the conversations between Mr. Wilson and the admiral that the latter's convictions on this point had undergone a radical change. After Wilson's favorable report, I

> conferred with Radford myself and concluded that he could be extremely useful in Washington. He was, as it turned out, that rare combination--a man of tough conviction who would refuse to remain set in his ways. Faced with new facts, he would time and again modify his views to fit them.[11]

Burke, conversely, stated several times over his career that he opposed unification of the services and maintained this view throughout his years as CNO.

A second issue on which Burke and Radford apparently disagreed was President Eisenhower's focus on a defense deterrence strategy of massive nuclear retaliation. General Taylor notes in *The Uncertain Trumpet* that Navy support for his alternative strategy, which he labeled "Flexible Response," did not surface from the CNO until after Radford was replaced as CJCS.[12] Burke communicated already during his time on the General Board that the nation needed strong conventional forces to deter communist aggression at the "fringes," not an over-reliance on strategic nuclear weapons. He adamantly maintained this opinion through the remainder of his career. Why the lack of open support for the Army's objections until after Radford left the position of CJCS? Although there is no clear-cut answer, it is likely that Burke did not want to create the perception that the two naval leaders were at odds on major issues, a perception which would have weakened Burke's ability to influence and negotiate to achieve success on other issues. Burke likely was "choosing his battles" and instead negotiating off-line with Radford and other senior leaders in attempts to gain consensus. Once Radford was replaced as CJCS, however, Burke was alone at the top of the Navy and felt free to speak his own views more aggressively.

A final obstacle existed for Burke from the start of his time as CNO. Burke believed he would be in office for only two years and would therefore have to move quickly to implement any policies he thought necessary. He knew, however, that he could

not "simply order those under his command to carry out his wishes; he would have to convince them that the policies he wanted implemented were worthy of their best effort."[13] To be persuasive, he would first need to earn respect in this position. Though he was appointed to shake things up, Burke displayed wisdom in his approach:

> [Burke] was careful to seek the opinions of his top officers . . . on appointments and other matters of importance. In addition, he personally wrote a monthly newsletter and had it distributed to all flag officers to explain what was happening in Washington and what he was trying to accomplish. By such methods, he soon succeeded in winning the respect of the navy's officer corps and consolidating his leadership.[14]

This is a striking example of Burke's ability to conceptually grasp a situation. The easy option was to replace everyone with his own picks but instead he showed the respect imbued in his character since his days at the Naval Academy. He also hoped that by operating in this manner he would overcome the negative aspects of his leapfrog promotion.[15] Burke displayed high marks in loyalty, respect and awareness, as well as interpersonal and conceptual skills. His ability to effectively influence senior naval leaders early, in a positive manner, laid solid foundations for their support during his time as CNO.

One of the most dramatic and immediate issues with which Burke contended--within days of taking office--was that of manpower. Under Burke's predecessor, Admiral Carney, the Eisenhower administration and Navy Secretary agreed to address Navy manpower issues solely without the help of a draft, which the Army and Air Forces still used in 1955.[16] As Burke studied the issue he came to firmly believe that circumstances had changed since that decision was made and the Navy could not meet its future manpower requirements without the aid of the draft. However, President Eisenhower had already publicly stated there would be no draft inductees for the Navy and both the Navy

and Defense Secretaries stood firmly by that policy as Burke presented his case to them.[17] The admiral was in a bind. He firmly believed it was a critical issue in which he was correct but he had only been in the office a very short time and wondered if a confrontation was worth it. If Burke had access to FM 22-100 in 1955 he might have read:

> When the Army's immediate needs conflict with the objectives of other agencies, strategic leaders work to reconcile the differences. There will be times when strategic leaders decide to stick to their course; there will be other times when Army leaders bend to accommodate other organizations.[18]

In this case Burke chose to stick to his course. Loading up with all the data he could get and, unable to reconcile his convictions with the Secretaries, he appealed past them to President Eisenhower. After hearing the arguments from both sides Eisenhower gave the nod to the CNO. The president's decision led to strained relations between the CNO and Secretaries for a time with the potential for Burke's "victory" to be a Pyrrhic one. Fortunately for Burke, time revealed the correctness of his position and gradually the tensions eased.[19]

Solving the immediate concern of manpower with the draft did not address the deeper issue underlying it: service morale. Morale had suffered for several reasons since the Second World War. To begin, the Navy did not have a pure competitor on which to focus its efforts. The Navy had essentially worked itself out of a job during the war and the resulting reduction in forces postwar was intense. Austere defense budgets and public infatuation with the Air Force in the five years leading up to 1950 also contributed to lower service morale. The Korean War largely remedied the perceived shortage of funds and ships on active duty for the Navy, however, and in fact before the close of 1953 "the US Navy was at its peak power since World War II."[20] But in late 1954, on the eve of

Burke's selection for CNO, the reenlistment rate in the Navy "was so low that reenlistment standards were temporarily lowered and incentives for 'shipping over' by first enlistment personnel were increased."[21] Recruiting and retaining the technically qualified personnel needed by the Navy in ever-increasing numbers was a challenge throughout Burke's tenure as CNO.

A second factor that contributed to the morale problem was the persistent conflict with the Air Force over service roles, defense strategy, and subsequent defense spending. Air Force proponents regularly argued that a substantial Navy was an unnecessary expense in the age of atomic weapons and that the Soviet communist threat could best be dealt with by means of Strategic Air Command bombers. Eisenhower's "New Look" strategy reflected this reliance in defense department budgets.[22] Navy proponents argued for a strong Navy as part of a balance of forces for defense. Service roles and access to the nation's precious nuclear weapons stockpile were particularly thorny points. Author Floyd Kennedy notes "the navy wanted to make carrier air strikes against naval shore targets, including enemy airfields. To the air force, this reasoning sounded like a poorly camouflaged intrusion into the responsibilities of the newly autonomous service." He further adds that this was representative of "arguments [that] went through the decade of the 1950s, with nothing settled or determined."[23] These service differences created challenges that remained resident throughout Burke's time in office.

To overcome these stumbling blocks the solution had to start at the top. Commenting on the Navy's morale issue while testifying in congressional hearings in late 1949, General Omar Bradley recalled:

> Senior [Navy] officers decrying the low morale of their forces evidently do not realize that the esprit of the men is but a mirror of their confidence in their leadership. Confidence in leaders is an accepted ingredient of organizational esprit. However, dissensions among the top command, like a single drop of poison in wine, can destroy all partakers.[24]

Burke took this principle to heart as CNO. He understood that strategic leaders must "inspire great effort. To mold morale and motivate the entire [service], strategic leaders cultivate a challenging, supportive, and respectful environment for soldiers and . . . civilians to operate in."[25] He began by acting to cultivate a healthy organizational culture in the Navy. Burke's personal philosophy was that:

> A leader can obtain the cooperation of his people by developing their trust in him and showing them that their goals are goals that will benefit the organization and the country, not just the leader. The first thing you have to do in an organization . . . is build up trust and confidence in yourself and your judgment. So the most important thing, I think, in any organization is for the organization to know where it's going, what it's going to try to do.[26]

While putting this philosophy into practice he first continued his reputation as a hard worker and communicated a personal example to the Navy in that regard. He also invited senior admirals to a conference to both get their inputs and communicate his philosophy. Though he perceived some initial resistance from some members of the audience in the form of ill-concealed smirks, he succeeded in letting them know he intended to be an active CNO and do his best to lead the Navy in the years to follow.[27]

To emphasize the importance of communication in an organization, Burke started a newsletter called "Flag Dope" in which he communicated to his admirals what was happening in Washington. The newsletter was complemented by bulletins and a phonograph record that Burke sent to every command in the Navy, emphasizing the "growing importance of the Navy. Never before had enlisted men in any service been brought face to face with the rationale behind command decisions."[28] This was very

much in step with FM 22-100 today: "As leaders initiate changes for long-range improvements, soldiers and DA civilians must feel that they're valued as persons, not just as workers or program supporters."[29]

On top of the stream of correspondence Burke added his personal touch. He sent handpicked representatives throughout the Navy to communicate how he felt about issues and in return to receive concerns from senior leaders. He offered rides to sailors when he saw them walking and, after putting them at ease, he asked them what they thought about the Navy and their commands. He furthermore frequently invited junior officers to accompany him on travel and would then have them write their thoughts on specific issues affecting the Navy.[30] Burke constantly sought thoughts and opinions that would give him a solid feel for the Navy's pulse, using these inputs to help round out his knowledge of issues and guide him in making decisions. This was similar to the approach General Colin Powell later used, who commented:

> When I am faced with a decision--picking somebody for a post, or choosing a course of action--I dredge up every scrap of knowledge I can. I call in people. I telephone them. I read whatever I can get my hands on. I use my intellect to inform my instinct. I then use my instinct to test all this data. 'Hey, instinct, does this sound right? Does it smell right, feel right, fit right?'

Burke's approach to cultivating a healthy naval culture made inroads. In regards to his efforts Jones and Kelley comment: "Before long, the Navy 'got the word,' as Secretary Wilson and Secretary Thomas had desired. The tempo of Navy life was being increased; there was a new boogie beat."[31] There remained significant work to be done to determine what role the Navy continued to play in the nation's defense, how the Navy needed to transition, and what advances in technology the Navy could harness to

advantage. Seeking to mold a positive Navy culture was a continuous and important process, but only the first step. Burke's vision required implementation.

Admiral Burke's strategic vision for the Navy did not develop in a vacuum, nor was he required to start the service moving down the road of modernization from a standstill. Burke had years of experience and maturity in policy-making areas when he was "piped aboard" as CNO. He also held his predecessor, Admiral Carney, in high esteem, realizing the improvements to the Navy that Carney accomplished. Burke openly pledged to continue working hard on programs Carney already set in motion.[32]

Burke's strategic vision foresaw limited, peripheral confrontations against communist aggression as the conflict of the future. Though the US needed nuclear weapons for deterrence against a general war, he felt a balance of strong conventional forces was required to quickly and powerfully deal with brushfire conflicts. He believed the communist goal was world domination, a principle incompatible with the application of a general nuclear war that resulted in mutual destruction. Communists, he believed, would therefore pressure less developed areas of the world. Burke viewed a strong navy and strong ties with allies as critical to contain this aggression. US naval power, he trusted, was "an absolute necessity for successful projection of our military power across the seas."[33]

During his stint as CNO Burke labored vigorously to promote the Navy's role and potential in containing communist aggression. Service roles and responsibilities had changed significantly since World War Two. President Eisenhower's "New Look" focused on the Air Force with diminished emphasis on the Army and Navy. Burke felt challenged to highlight and heighten the Navy's role in national defense.

Army Leadership states: "Because of their maturity and wisdom, [strategic leaders] tolerate ambiguity, knowing they will never have all the information they want. Instead, they carefully analyze events and decide when to make a decision, realizing that they must innovate and accept some risk."[34] Facing Burke in his early days as CNO was the issue of deciding which developments in technology offered the most promise to the Navy. One of these developments was nuclear power. Significant advances were achieved in harnessing atomic energy for ship propulsion and weapons by 1955. The world's first atomic submarine, the *Nautilus*, was a resounding success in proving the advantages of nuclear propulsion for this type of vessel. Efforts were underway to apply the same advantages to surface units, as well. Burke was comfortable grasping the significance of these events and, concurring with advice and urgings from his subordinates, decided to proceed aggressively. In late 1955 he declared that all submarines purchased and produced after the coming fiscal year were to be nuclear powered.[35] This was a significant commitment considering the expense of building nuclear reactors and the relative infancy of this technology. Burke knew the additional expense meant sacrifice in another area for the Navy but he believed the advantages needed to be seized quickly and wholeheartedly. Aggressiveness in leveraging new technology was a significant trait sought by the Secretary of the Navy when Burke was selected, a fact of which the new CNO was well aware.

Another major topic the new CNO addressed was the role of nuclear weapons. Long a believer that the Navy should play a critical part in the employment of nuclear weapons Burke sought ways to expand the Navy's abilities in this area. He was keenly interested in the potential to launch nuclear tipped intermediate range ballistic missiles

from vessels at sea. President Eisenhower himself gave Burke a prime opportunity to pursue that notion when, during a National Security Council meeting in late 1955, the "president swore he would have a reliable ballistic missile system quickly, even if he had to chair the project himself."[36] A vessel with this capability would be a significant deterrent to nuclear attack by the Soviets. As a mobile, sea-based platform would be difficult to target and destroy, it would allow the United States to retain a nuclear retaliatory capability against a pre-emptive Soviet nuclear strike. When it was suggested to Burke that nuclear-tipped missiles could be built small enough to fit into a submarine, he made the strategic decision to vigorously pursue the possibility, even over the objections of his senior admiral advisers.[37] He believed technological obstacles could be overcome and the advantages of having such a system would be enormous. When coupled with nuclear propulsion in a submarine, Burke knew the combination would be extraordinary. It was an additional expensive endeavor that necessitated cuts elsewhere but Burke seized the opportunity with zeal.

These decisions on nuclear power and weapons matched Burke's strategic vision for the Navy and the characteristics sought by Burke's civilian superiors. That he made them so soon after taking office is striking. They are in line with the ideas expressed in FM 22-100:

> Strategic leaders make tough decisions about priorities. Their goal is a capable, prepared, and victorious force. In peacetime, strategic leaders decide which programs get funded and consider the implications of those choices. Allocating resources isn't simply a matter of choosing helicopters, tanks, and missiles for the future [service]. Strategic resourcing affects how the [service] will operate and fight tomorrow.[38]

Allocating resources involved difficult decisions made with long-term results in mind. The potential for misstep was noteworthy. Much research and thought was put into

Burke's early decisions but throughout his first months as CNO he remained true to a philosophy developed during his early years in destroyers: "When you have got anything to do, the time to do it is right now. If you've got power, use it and use it fast, and the time to make a decision is as soon as the problem presents itself."[39]

Burke addressed a variety of significant issues during his first term as CNO including a leapfrog promotion, organizational culture, strategic vision, and nuclear technology. With the exception of early promotion, each of these issues continued to be felt during the next two years from 1957-1959, together with reorganization issues that surfaced during his second term in office. Though he was tired from working 14-hour days seven days a week Burke reluctantly accepted a second term upon Eisenhower's insistence, "thereby breaking the de facto postwar tradition that the CNO would serve only one two-year term."[40] His second two years proved no less demanding of his strategic leadership than the first two years.

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[5]E. B. Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke* (New York: Random House, 1990), 389-391.

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[12]Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 58, 107.

[13]Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," 274.

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[15]Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 391.

[16]Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 393.

[17]Ibid., 394.

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[20]John R. Wadleigh, "Charles Sparks Thomas," in *American Secretaries of the Navy*, Volume 2, ed. Paolo E. Coletta (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 859.

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[23]Floyd D. Kennedy, Jr., "The Creation of the Cold War Navy, 1953-1962," in *In Peace and War*, ed. Kenneth J. Hagan (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), 306-307.

[24]Omar N. Bradley, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 511.

[25]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, 7-17.

[26]Arleigh Burke in *Naval Leadership: Voices of Experience*, ed. Karel Montor et al. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 208.

[27]Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 390.

[28]Jones and Kelley, *Admiral Arleigh (31-Knot) Burke*, 183.

[29]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, 7-17 - 7-18.

[30]Jones and Kelley, *Admiral Arleigh (31-Knot) Burke*, 181-182.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 393.

[33]David Rosenberg, "Burke Speaks Out on Korea," *Proceedings* 126, no. 5 (May 2000): 68. Rosenberg quotes from a message Admiral Burke wrote 5 October 1950 in response to a request by Captain Alexander McDill, special assistant for public relations to Navy Secretary Francis Matthews. McDill requested Burke summarize the lessons learned from the conflict to date.

[34]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, 7-9.

[35]Richard G. Hewlett and Francis Duncan, *Nuclear Navy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 266.

[36]Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People's Navy* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 351.

[37]Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 399.

[38]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, 7-19.

[39]Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," 268.

[40]Ibid., 284.

CHAPTER 5

HITTING STRIDE

In August 1957 Admiral Arleigh Burke began his third year as Chief of Naval Operations bolstered by the Eisenhower Administration's faith in his capabilities, a faith manifested in his reappointment to a second (1957-1959) and eventually third term (1959-1961). The admiral could concentrate with renewed energy on implementing his policies and vision for the United States Navy. Significant challenges, however, would accompany his final years in office that tested his strategic leadership and energy to the limits. Within months of beginning his second term Burke became a more vocal dissenter to the strategy of "massive retaliation." Also within months of his reappointment Americans were faced with the success of the Soviets in placing a satellite in orbit around the earth ahead of the United States. Public and congressional reaction sparked an increase in defense spending as well as a movement to reorganize the Department of Defense, both difficult issues for the Navy. Burke's last days in office also saw a monumental failure on the part of the US government to overthrow a communist dictatorship in Cuba, an activity in which Burke was involved. The subsequent political embarrassment and recrimination among those implicated cast a shadow over an otherwise bright six years in office.

The smiling face of good fortune shone on Admiral Burke as he began a second two-year assignment as the Navy's top principal, however. No longer "the new kid on the block," Burke had cracked the code on breaking the single-term tradition and could speak with experience. As he began his second tour, any misgivings he felt previous to this about publicly disagreeing with more senior naval officers (past which he had been

promoted) no longer directly affected his service on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He became the sole Navy voice when General Nathan Twining replaced Admiral Radford as chairman in August 1957. While serving as chairman Radford's views were more directly in line with President Eisenhower's views than were Burke's. Douglas Kinnard hints at the disparity between Burke and Radford during that time:

> The summer of 1957 brought the retirement of Admiral Arthur Radford. For four years as CJCS he had been an able advocate of the administration's position on defense matters. Highly effective and respected by the president . . . he had the tough job of working routinely with the service chiefs. Only one of these did Radford consider cooperative, and that was Nathan Twining, who succeeded him as chairman.
>
> Twining's approach as chairman was apparently somewhat less partisan than Radford's had been. Admiral Arleigh Burke had absolute confidence that Twining, in representing the chiefs, would tell the entire story.[1]

With Radford retired from the scene Burke could at last freely voice his opinion without inhibition and in fact became a more outspoken critic of the president's massive retaliation defense policy.

During the spring and summer of 1957 Burke had Navy analysts studying force requirements for Strategic Air Command to estimate if the requirements claimed by the Air Force were optimal for the tasks assigned. From the Navy's perspective the analysts suggested the Air Force had more than it needed to do the job. The CNO followed this report in the fall of 1957 with a long-range analysis of "national strategy in an era of nuclear parity" from the Navy's view.[2] Completed in December of that year the study concluded essentially that in an environment where both the United States and the Soviet Union had enough nuclear weapons to destroy each other, the threat of nuclear war would be reduced. Neither side would risk its own destruction through a preemptive strike. The result of this standoff would be non-nuclear Soviet aggression "near the edges" which

would need to be addressed by conventional means. Using this argument Burke could offer "a concrete alternative to massive retaliation and a justification for concentrating resources on preparations for limited war."[3] Burke's alternative was a shift in focus to conventional forces, since in his analysis they were the most likely to be used to combat the spread of communism.

The fact that these studies were conducted just before and immediately after Admiral Radford retired, coupled with Burke's uneasiness publicly confronting an elder naval officer with whom he had a disagreement, suggests more than coincidence. More likely these studies were efforts to lend justification and credence as formal underpinnings to beliefs that Burke likely held for years leading up to his second term in office. After Radford left, Burke felt the time was right to publicly articulate them. When the Army's Chief of Staff, General Taylor, reintroduced his objections to the policy of "massive retaliation" to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the spring of 1958, Burke heartily endorsed General Taylor's proposed revisions to that policy.[4] Having consensus across service lines as well as having someone of General Taylor's stature on the same side likely emboldened Burke.

This vocal support for an alternative to the administration's policy stands in marked contrast to Burke's silence during the same debate two years prior. It represents not only a "jelling" of Burke's view on the subject but also a shift in his willingness to boldly express that view as the sole naval representative on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It further represents progression in the development of Burke's strategic leadership influencing actions: communicating his vision for the Navy. As a leader Burke was clearly concerned about the security of the US and demonstrated a willingness to engage

an issue in which he believed strongly. Burke's actions also demonstrated that he had the ability to grasp the scope and significance of the issue. By the two year mark Burke was confidently hitting his stride as a strategic level leader.

Aside from Radford's retirement relieving any inhibitions on communicating his vision, Burke had a unique opportunity thrust upon him in early October 1957. Russia announced it had placed the world's first man-made satellite into orbit around the earth. The Soviets dubbed the satellite *Sputnik*. The reaction within the United States was both intense and immediate. According to Robert Divine, author of *The Sputnik Challenge*, when Americans discussed the Soviet feat at that time the "most frequent comparison was with Pearl Harbor."[5] Suddenly the soundness of the United States' security and defense strategy was called into question. Many Americans were shocked and dismayed that the Soviets were able to enter the space frontier first:

> *Time* and *Newsweek* saw *Sputnik* as both a striking scientific feat and an ominous event in the Cold War. On the one hand, they hailed the orbiting satellite as a first step "toward the conquest of outer space," thus "opening a bright new chapter in mankind's conquest of the natural environment." But at the same time, they regretted that "man's greatest technological triumph since the atomic bomb" had been scored by "the controlled scientists of a despotic state."[6]

American pride and self-confidence were challenged. Deep into a cold war with an opposing ideology Americans viewed the success of *Sputnik* as a test that America had failed. As at Pearly Harbor, once again the United States had been caught complacent and unaware with disastrous results--only this time those results were intangible.

Aside from the struggle between opposing social philosophies, however, a more portentous danger lay in the military implications of *Sputnik*. The Soviet Union,

> By using a rocket powerful enough to put a 184-pound satellite into orbit, demonstrated that they might well be close to perfecting the world's first

> intercontinental ballistic missile--an ICBM capable of carrying a nuclear warhead the thousands of miles that separated the two superpowers.[7]

This startling realization, which to the American public *Sputnik* visually and flagrantly insinuated, precipitated political pressure on the Eisenhower Administration to respond with military expansion. As Eisenhower was a Republican the most acute challenges came from Democrats:

> Ardent Cold Warriors such as . . . Stuart Symington . . . had been charging for years that the Eisenhower administration had not been spending enough on national defense . . . the Democratic Advisory Council, which included former President Harry Truman . . . accused the Eisenhower administration of "unilateral disarmament at the expense of our national security."[8]

Pressure built in both the public and congress to quickly raise defense spending to meet the threat. Within this context it was a natural extension for the military services to attempt to benefit from the outside catalyst. Douglass Kinnard bluntly states:

> It would probably have been impossible . . . for the services not to have viewed the developing public and congressional concern as a favorable climate for increased emphasis on larger defense budgets. Obviously, *Sputnik* affected the defense budget. The economy mood of the previous year was now something of an embarrassment, particularly to Congress.[9]

Burke was not a fool and no exception in this instance. Each service for many years prior to *Sputnik* had presented its case for the need to receive more funding than was allocated each year. Each believed increased funding was both desirable and necessary to ensure an adequate defense from their viewpoint. With a push from both the public and congress the furor over *Sputnik* provided a unique opportunity to achieve such increases.

Burke began by taking stock of the situation. In FM 22-100 it states: "Strategic leaders must survey the political landscape and the international environment, for these affect the organization and shape the future strategic requirements."[10] Burke's strategic assessment in this case led him to see both opportunities to advance the Navy's cause and

a need to address shortcomings. At a National Security Council meeting in early November 1957, he was introduced to the findings of a security advisory committee report assessing the Soviet situation. Burke focused on areas in the report directly impacted by the Navy, particularly recommendations to accelerate Polaris missile development and recommendations to enact reorganization of the Department of Defense, including greater centralization of authority under the Defense Secretary.[11] Since Congress saw the strategic advantages of nuclear missile armed submarines as an excellent counter to the perceived Soviet threat, the Navy subsequently gained extra funding and approval to accelerate the Polaris system by the end of 1957 and used testimony before a Senate committee during the same time frame to advertise further funding desires.[12] Momentum had swung in favor of increased defense spending and Burke worked to ensure the Navy made the best of an opportunity.

Burke's response to the challenge and opportunity presented by *Sputnik* demonstrate effectiveness in conceptual and technical skills at the strategic level. He was able to deal with the uncertainty of the situation and take concrete action in fielding additional nuclear submarines to meet the perceived threat. In doing so he translated the political goal of countering the Soviet threat into the military objective of additional missile carrying submarines. He wisely chose to seize the opportunity to add to the nation's defense capability while simultaneously benefiting his service.

Much to the chagrin of Admiral Burke the security dilemma caused by *Sputnik* gave rise also to a strong movement to reorganize and centralize authority within the Defense Department. President Eisenhower had long viewed this movement as a necessity in the Cold War world and seized the self-doubt of American defensive

capabilities, brought on by *Sputnik* and Soviet tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles, to propagate this movement.[13] While pressure grew to greatly increase defense spending, which Eisenhower believed was unnecessary and irresponsible, the president felt the correct course did include defense reorganization. If reorganized, Eisenhower felt the Defense Department could provide Americans "safety with solvency. The country is entitled to both."[14] Eisenhower perceived significant duplication of effort in weapons development caused by interservice rivalry, particularly regarding ballistic missiles.[15] He believed this duplication subsequently wasted money. Conceptually the president felt the best way this duplication could be eliminated was by centralizing research and development for weapons under the Secretary of Defense and removing control from the services.

Another critical factor driving Eisenhower's reorganization efforts was his belief in unity of command as a key element in control. He believed the services, especially the service chiefs on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, looked too much at their own service requirements and not enough at America's requirements for defense as a whole.[16] By moving authority toward the Secretary of Defense and away from the departmental secretaries and service chiefs, to include removing the chiefs from direct operational control of forces, Eisenhower believed he could compel the services to look beyond their narrow, well-intentioned interests to the bigger picture of defense as a whole. This change in focus would, Eisenhower reasoned, lead to a reduction in interservice rivalry and increase unity of effort and execution among the services.[17]

President Eisenhower's unification and reorganization efforts were aimed at garnering the utmost economy and efficiency out of the ability of the Defense

Department to deter and defeat threats to American interests in both peace and war. It was his answer to the question of how America's defenses needed to be changed in response to the Soviet threat implied by *Sputnik*. He believed the basics of US defense were sound and saw no reason to panic. Rather, the nation's defenses needed to be made more efficient in critical areas, such as missile development, to improve overall capabilities while holding down costs and avoiding "panic" spending.

Admiral Burke, by contrast, had strong reservations about unification and reorganization efforts, movements he fought against for much of his career. In an oral history interview Burke stated that, in regards to the reorganization efforts of 1958, "I opposed this thing from the beginning, but it didn't do very much good. I had plenty of opportunity to express my views, which I did on many occasions. And [President Eisenhower] was unhappy with my testimony before Congress."[18] Burke's congressional testimony included his strong reservations about the subject, causing Robert Divine to assert that at one point Eisenhower, referring "to Burke and [another individual] obliquely . . . said 'their future retention would depend on their loyalty to the success of the [reorganization] plan'."[19] Thankfully for Burke the president's temper cooled and no action was taken along this line.

Burke feared centralization of power under the Secretary of Defense could potentially impair the Navy's ability to execute its missions--decentralization of decision making was critical to how the Navy functioned in Burke's view and experience. In particular he feared a move to merge the individual services into a single service, with a corresponding single overarching chief of staff and single general staff. Such a move, Burke argued, would lead to mistakes being made in executing the nation's defense. He

once summarized his feelings on the merging of services during an interview: "In other words, you don't have the checks and balances that you would have if you had independent services."[20] Checks and balances were critical in the eyes of the CNO to prevent disastrous mistakes. Burke's feelings on this were in part based on his personal and practical experience serving as deputy chief of staff for the commander of naval forces in the Korean War. One item he noted in particular when writing up a summary of lessons learned dealt with centralization of control. Burke commented:

> In this war, the Navy has been, in effect, under Army command. The Army staff has had an unusually fine group of people, but they are used to handling armies. They have a tendency, which was natural enough, to handle the Navy the same way. They shove their own battalions around each morning. They evaluate the situation each day and they change their plans to fit the most recent evaluation. They have difficulty in understanding that such things cannot be done in any Navy. As a result, there had to be continual representation, all on a very friendly basis, to convince an Army staff that naval warfare is different from land warfare. This might have turned out to have been extremely serious had naval forces been directly under the control of an Army staff.[21]

This experience enforced Burke's belief that if too much centralization of control of the individual services occurred, such as under a single overarching general staff or single service concept, naval forces would not be able to operate effectively. In Burke's view the nature of naval warfare necessitated decentralized control.

Eventually, though, the influences supporting reorganization were too strong for Burke to deter entirely and the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1958 went into effect 06 August 1958. The legislation included almost all of Eisenhower's intentions for it. Burke's sole consolation in staying the course he believed best for his service was the success of efforts to ensure the wording of the document did not provide for establishment of a national general staff or for the merger of individual services.[22] As a strategic level leader he had made his best attempts at negotiating and achieving a

consensus for the Navy's cause and managed to ensure that the issues he felt were most critical were settled in a manner that protected the vitality of his organization.

The most significant and turbulent event of Admiral Burke's time as CNO occurred during his third tour in office. During the early morning hours of 17 April 1961, Cuban exiles supported by the United States executed an amphibious assault upon the island in an attempt to spark an uprising and overthrow Fidel Castro. This ill-fated mission, dubbed the Bay of Pigs Invasion, was an utter failure and international embarrassment for the newly inaugurated President John F. Kennedy, who painstakingly but vainly sought to keep US involvement plausibly deniable.

From the start Burke's involvement with the Kennedy Administration on this issue in January of 1961 was somewhat contentious. According to author Trumbull Higgins:

> Admiral Burke, as Chief of Naval Operations, was rightly irritated that the Joint Chiefs were ordered only to advise on the proposed operation and were forbidden, like so many others involved, to talk about it in a rational military fashion with the subordinates who would provide the staff work.[23]

President Kennedy made clear that the proposed operation was under the ownership of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), not the military, and in an effort to preserve secrecy the Joint Chiefs were not allowed to discuss the operation with their subordinates. Therein lay the rub for Admiral Burke. Though Cuban exiles would carry out the actual assault, the operation was of a clearly military nature and Burke felt the military services should be more directly involved than the president allowed.

In this case Burke did not press the issue and his acquiescence in such a critical matter is troublesome. By that point in his career, most notably during his preceding five and one half years as CNO, Burke had groomed a well-established reputation for voicing

his opinion freely, regardless of whether or not his opinion was popular. More than once it landed him in hot water with the president. A defense secretary once commented about Burke's "disagreeable" testimony before a congressional committee, saying, "I wish he had supported the president's position, but nobody's going to tell Admiral Burke what to say if he doesn't believe it."[24]

From this perspective it should have been almost natural for Burke to speak out if he had any serious reservations about the practicability of the plan. Lyman Kirkpatrick, Inspector General of the CIA at the time of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, stated later: "The White House advisers have noted in their books that nobody in the While House was really being critical about the operation. They assumed that the President was accepting the advice of qualified experts, and therefore they were unwilling to submit themselves to being the opposition to the operation." He goes on to say, in-line with conclusions his internal CIA investigation reached, that "[operations] must be reviewed in the most tough, highly critical, and objective manner. There must be those that are going to say 'no' or at least express all the warnings and let the President know the dangers that he is taking."[25] President Kennedy likely could not have agreed more with this assessment. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs clearly fall into this realm. Burke himself emphasized this concept in his own career, purposely choosing intelligent officers to present objections and critique plans so he would not "make any serious mistakes, or if [I] made them, I would not make them without knowing that somebody thought it was a serious mistake."[26] It was a policy of his to keep a closely assigned "devil's advocate" to avoid the danger of his staff developing into "yes men."

It would be easy at this point to argue that President Kennedy openly limited participation of the Joint Chiefs, thereby letting Burke "off the hook." Yet this argument is invalid within the light of FM 22-100, which quotes Admiral Burke as saying: "Leadership . . . takes all the good characteristics, like integrity, dedication of purpose, selflessness, knowledge, skill, implacability, as well as determination not to accept failure."[27] As a member assigned to provide military advice to the Secretary of Defense and President, regardless of how little that advice seemed to be openly sought, Admiral Burke was obligated to vigorously express reservations and shortcomings he perceived in any plan. With his own experiences during the Second World War he knew how difficult and complex an amphibious assault operation was to complete successfully. At one point he even referred to the CIA plan as "weak" and "sloppy," yet each of four times the operation was reviewed and "voted on" by the Joint Chiefs between 15 March 1961 and 15 April 1961, Burke and the others acquiesced.[28]

Why then did Burke not speak out against the ill-advised mission? John P. Madden, in his thesis for Master of Arts in history, concluded that Burke wanted so much to remove Castro from power that he was willing to overlook the plan's shortfalls.[29] While it's true that Burke strongly desired to see Castro removed from power and it is also true that as a fallible human being Burke was subject to make mistakes in judgment, the notion that Burke allowed his desires to cloud his judgment as the sole reason for acquiescence in this issue does not seem entirely plausible. His apparent lack of action is entirely out of character for Burke when compared to the rest of his career. In fact, he stressed the necessity of speaking out numerous times over the years and even took a sort of grim satisfaction in riding out political storms caused by some of his disagreements

with presidential policies. Taken together with the obvious dissatisfaction of his counterpart on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Commandant of the Marine Corps General David Shoup, Burke must have thought the plan had little if any margin for error if it were to succeed--in effect, unrealistic.[30] His acquiescence must have sprung at least partially from another root.

Burke's relationship with President Kennedy may provide the rest of the answer. Several days before President Kennedy was inaugurated Admiral Burke conducted an interview with a Greek reporter, Elias P. Demetracopoulos. The interview contained rhetoric on Burke's part that could be considered inflammatory to the Soviet Union. Demetracopoulos described it as "clearly muscle-flexing, with phraseology that is undiplomatic but wholly in keeping with the era."[31] The interview, however, was not published for a month and in the meantime the new president took office. One of Kennedy's first acts was to place a "gag order" on military officials--all public statements had to be cleared through the Administration. The new president wanted tight control of the military and sought to smooth relations somewhat with the Soviet Union.

When the interview hit newspapers on 15 February it created a political firestorm:

> The assumption that Admiral Burke was challenging the administration's right to "muzzle" him emerged immediately and was widespread; the contents of the interview were secondary . . . [one could] almost see the steam rising from the new administration's officials, facing the "first challenge" to their new authority.[32]

The controversy was exacerbated by confusion over whether the interview occurred before or after the new president's inauguration and whether or not the interview transcript had been cleared through public affairs channels prior to release.

Members of the Kennedy administration, most notably Pentagon spokesman and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Arthur Sylvester, used the opportunity to try and make an example out of Burke to the rest of the military. Sylvester inferred Burke had lied about the actual date of the interview and had used the interview to challenge the new administration. In other words, Burke was not a "team player."[33] Though Burke and the Navy did their best to straighten the record and perceptions, the damage was already done. Demetracopoulas further comments that the relationship between Burke and Kennedy never recovered, noting that during the Bay of Pigs invasion, which took place shortly thereafter, "the tension between President Kennedy and Admiral Burke was palpable."[34]

Madden concludes in his thesis that the breakdown of the relationship between President Kennedy and the military was a crucial reason the invasion failed.[35] Burke concludes what happened was a breakdown of the government's ability to act in a complex situation.[36] Regardless of one's conclusions it is readily apparent that Burke's relationship with Kennedy directly impacted his actions and is a critical piece of the proverbial puzzle. President Kennedy clearly, forcefully, and repeatedly communicated to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the operation to oust Castro belonged to the CIA and that the Joint Chiefs were to stay out of the conduct of the operation.[37] Burke clearly wanted Castro removed. President Kennedy campaigned on the promise to deal with Castro. Everywhere there seemed to be pressure to get rid of Castro and as time passed he only became more firmly entrenched in power. In the midst of this scenario the Kennedy Administration misconstrued an interview given by Burke and pressured Burke to "get in line," even going so far as to launch a CIA investigation to determine Burke's loyalties.[38]

This was not an environment conducive to subordinate questioning of a superior's decision--a leadership failure on the part of the president. Burke was likely told to "keep his nose out of CIA business" and to "get in line" enough times that he gave the administration exactly what it wanted: acquiescence. What he withheld, which constituted a leadership failure on Burke's part, was loyalty. In the meantime he did everything he could to ensure the Navy was ready to assist the exiles, knowing it would be the Navy who would be tasked with rescuing the operation if it went awry. He may have also believed Kennedy would allow direct US military intervention if the invasion did go poorly, in order to prevent its failure.

In any event, when Burke's Commander-in-Chief told him to essentially sit down and be quiet, Burke obeyed the order. The quandary Burke found himself in resulted in the strategic leadership failure that followed. Years later Burke, condemning his own inaction, emphatically lamented:

> There was not enough checking by anybody including the Chiefs. We didn't insist upon knowing . . . we were not tough enough. Our big fault was standing in awe of the Presidency instead of pounding the table and demanding and being real rough, we were not. We set down our case and then we shut up and that was a mistake.[39]

Volumes have since been written in the aftermath with a considerable amount of finger pointing. President Kennedy, who took over from Eisenhower barely three months prior to the infamous Bay of Pigs operation, within days of its failure "appointed a Cuban Study Group to review the Bay of Pigs operation and make recommendations as to how similar mistakes could be avoided in the future."[40] Burke was appointed to this group as the sole representative of the Joint Chiefs. Unsurprisingly one of the group's significant findings, which Kennedy subsequently implemented, declared the Joint Chiefs of Staff

"were to take full responsibility for paramilitary operations, just as they did for conventional military operations, and that they were to bring any objections forcefully to the attention of their civilian superiors."[41] The remainder of the group's findings similarly demonstrated a narrow focus on the technical reasons for the failure, vice the larger political reasons, and reflected Kennedy's tight control over the workings of the group.[42]

From the perspectives of Admiral Burke and the Navy one of the most significant outcomes was the near total loss of faith in the advice of senior military leaders on the part of the president. Author Trumbull Higgins wrote:

> Kennedy would say bitterly a year later after the Cuban missile crisis: "The first advice I'm going to give my successor is to watch the generals and to avoid feeling that just because they were military men their opinions on military matters were worth a damn."[43]

This loss of presidential faith promised to marginalize Burke's successor and make life extremely difficult for the future Chief of Naval Operations, as well as for Burke during the remainder of his tenure.

Shortly after the Cuban Study Group completed their work in the summer of 1961, Burke retired. Though President Kennedy offered him a fourth term and subsequently the ambassadorship to Australia Burke felt that six years was long enough both for him and the Navy.[44] His last months in office were a frustrating finish to a productive naval career.

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[1]Douglas Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 55.

[2]David Alan Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," in *The Chiefs of Naval Operations*, ed. Robert William Love Jr. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 292.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Robert Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xv.

[6]Ibid., xiv.

[7]Ibid., xv.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense*, 59.

[10]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington: Army Press, 1999), 7-21.

[11]Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," 285.

[12]John R. Wadleigh, "Thomas Sovereign Gates, Jr.," in *American Secretaries of the Navy*, Volume 2 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 885-886.

[13]Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge*, 85.

[14]Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Defense Reorganization for Unity" (speech delivered before the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the International Press Institute, Washington, D.C., 17 April 1958), *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Volume 24, 1 May 1958.

[15]Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge*, 85.

[16]Dwight D. Eisenhower, "65th Special Message to the Congress on Reorganization of the Defense Establishment" (message delivered before Congress, 03 April 1958). Federal Register Division, National Archives and Records Service, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956-), 274-290.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Arleigh A. Burke, interview by John T. Mason Jr., December 1972, interview 2, transcript, Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Ks.

[19]Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge*, 134.

[20]Burke, interview by John T. Mason Jr., interview 2.

[21]Arleigh Burke, "Burke Speaks Out on Korea," *Proceedings* 126, no. 5 (May 2000): 70-71.

[22]Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke," 288.

[23]Trumbull Higgins, *The Perfect Failure* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 82.

[24]E. B. Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke* (New York: Random House, 1990), 425.

[25]Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, Jr., "Paramilitary Case Study: The Bay of Pigs" (a delivered lecture), *Naval War College Review* 25, no. 2 (November/December 1972): 32-42.

[26]Burke, interview by John T. Mason, Jr., interview 2.

[27]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington: Army Press, 1999), 7-13.

[28]Higgins, *The Perfect Failure*, 168.

[29]John P. Madden, "Operation Bumpy Road: The role of Admiral Arleigh Burke and the U.S. Navy in the Bay of Pigs Invasion" (M.A. Thesis, Old Dominion University, 1988), 126.

[30]Higgins, *The Perfect Failure*, 84.

[31]Elias P. Demetracopoulos, "Muzzling Admiral Burke," *Proceedings* 126, no. 1 (January 2000): 65.

[32]Ibid., 66.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., 67.

[35]Madden, "Operation Bumpy Road," 4.

[36]Arleigh A. Burke, interview by John T. Mason Jr., February 1973, interview 4, transcript, Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Ks.

[37]Madden, "Operation Bumpy Road," 1.

[38]Demetracopoulos, "Muzzling Admiral Burke," 67.

[39]Burke, interview by John T. Mason, Jr., interview 4.

[40]Higgins, *The Perfect Failure*, 315.

[41]Ibid., 168.

[42]Ibid., 157.

[43]Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston, published 1978), 524; quoted in Higgins, *The Perfect Failure*, 167.

[44]Burke, interview by John T. Mason, Jr., interview 4.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Admiral Burke retired in August 1961 after forty-two years of naval service. The final six of those years were spent serving a history-making three terms as the Navy's Chief, a record yet to be equaled or exceeded. During his tenure Burke chaired several improvements to the Navy, including a refined and expanded organizational vision more closely aligned with evolving military defense strategy, as well as a dramatic leap forward in harnessing technological advances--particularly in the nuclear field. Though he did not have a formal leadership manual to guide him, his actions in dealing with significant issues as a strategic leader in nearly every case clearly reflect principles found in the Army's leadership manual today. Burke's one marked exception to following these principles occurred just short of his retirement. The issues addressed in this writing, though not exhaustive, are more than enough to produce a solid evaluation of Burke's strategic leadership. Those major issues not addressed remain interesting ancillary material yet to be explored from the perspective of Burke's strategic leadership skills and actions.

One of the fundamental goals of a strategic leader, according to *Army Leadership,* "is to leave the Army better than they found it."[1] Did Admiral Arleigh Burke leave the Navy better than he found it after six years as Chief of Naval Operations? In several ways the answer is absolutely "yes." By the time Burke retired, the nation's defense strategy had shifted to one of "flexible response" to conflict and away from "massive retaliation" and its over-reliance on nuclear weapons. Conventional forces, neglected at the altar of nuclear weapons, received renewed emphasis under the new strategy. Burke was an

active proponent of this shift and emphasized the advantages of having a diversified arsenal with which to address a broad spectrum of threats.

In the same vein he realized the strategic importance of nuclear propulsion and sea-based nuclear weapons, securing a vital role for the Navy in the nation's nuclear deterrence efforts. Burke took an institution slow to embrace change and technology and shook it up. Relying on his aggressive instincts, honed by years of combat, self-development through study and research, and experience developing long-range strategy for the Navy, Burke seized advances in technology and sought to exploit them quickly. When he took office in 1955 the Navy's first nuclear powered submarine, *Nautilus*, had sailed barely seven months prior. When he retired from office in 1961 every American submarine being produced was being powered by nuclear propulsion. Furthermore, when Burke first became CNO, underwater submarine-launched, nuclear-armed missiles were infeasible; when he left nearly half a dozen Polaris nuclear missile submarines were in commission and a total of twenty-nine were authorized.[2] Nuclear powered submarines with nuclear tipped missiles remain a vital part of America's nuclear deterrence efforts today.

Though he could not be aware of it at the time, the leadership principles Burke displayed as CNO almost exclusively match those taught in *Army Leadership* today. With no formal training on leadership at the highest levels of military organization, Burke nevertheless understood what was required to be a prolific service chief. A sizeable measure of his success in achieving that status stemmed from his work ethic and inexhaustible drive, tempered by his unique experiences in combat and a long career spent in positions that broadened and challenged his abilities to their limits. But hard

work was only part of the equation. Burke learned to recognize his weaknesses in knowledge and understanding and took active steps to eliminate them. He learned as much as he could about issues that affected his organization, especially those issues that seemed likely to affect the Navy long-term, such as major world economic and political pressures and developments. In short, he exhibited a breadth of knowledge on critical issues and developed a keen sense for identifying the crucial information needed to make wise and timely decisions. He then surrounded himself with professional naval officers who complemented his strengths, atoned for his weaknesses, and ensured he did not make any foolish, uninformed decisions.

One of Burke's leadership strengths was his ability to conceptualize, which manifested itself immediately when he became CNO. The first of many significant issues with which he dealt was the situation caused by his unexpected, accelerated promotion. Visualizing a deliberate approach, he was able to foster critical support from admirals he had bypassed that in turn enabled him to be effective in his new leadership role. With great care and tact he communicated by word and deed that he realized the sensitivity of his appointment, that he held great respect for and loyalty to those admirals more senior in service, and that he knew he did not know all the answers and indeed needed these admirals' advice to lead the Navy. His efforts in this situation reflect a high level of communication both as an interpersonal skill and as an influencing action. In a sense he also proved adept at staff building by ensuring that senior admirals were willing to work hard to provide him with critical information and advice on issues of significance to the Navy--a sort of pseudo-staff functionality.

Burke continued a solid demonstration of strategic leadership principles long after his quick start in the summer of 1955. Time and again in the face of challenging issues Burke demonstrated great skill in being able to conceptually grasp a problem and situation. From this grasp he was able to envision a path to successfully address it. A clear example of this is found in his handling of the Navy's sagging morale at the time he took office. Burke understood an individual's need to feel a sense of purpose and belonging and the influence that sense could bring to an organization. The CNO set about addressing this need and, subsequently, influenced Navy culture by communicating his vision to all commands in the fleet, letting every individual know their role in the larger context of the service and how important they were to their nation's defense. He also influenced by opening lines of communication up and down the chain of command, even sending out representatives to various commands in order to promulgate his vision and gather inputs and concerns. Burke wanted to know the pulse of the Navy and was willing to go to extreme measures to get it, including soliciting concerns from hitch-hiking sailors and giving junior officers essays to write covering critical issues. These techniques allowed him to improve the Navy by fostering a learning environment and encouraging development of intellectual capital. Morale improved as individuals perceived they had a voice and an important mission. As CNO Burke demonstrated proficiency in conceptual skills, influencing, and improving actions.

Dealing with advances in technology, particularly nuclear, was another area in which Burke proved to be an adroit strategic leader. With an advanced engineering degree and experience in several key jobs that exposed him to harnessing advances for the Navy's benefit, Burke was confident in this role. Rapid advances in nuclear weapons,

missiles, and nuclear propulsion created an environment that required a steady hand in decision-making--one that could quickly identify the most promising but feasible technologies in an austere budget environment. Decisions at Burke's level carried long lasting implications requiring substantial future resources. Burke managed these challenges with excellence. For example, he perceived the revolution of nuclear propulsion in the role of submarines and surface ships and understood that these advances needed to be exploited rapidly. Within a few months of becoming CNO he mandated that all future submarines were to be propelled by nuclear power and he aggressively pursued nuclear powered surface ship programs. His actions demonstrate a solid grasp of influencing action in resolute decision-making. They also show his strength in technical skills, successfully leveraging new technology to achieve great advances in combat capabilities, and the technical skill of strategic art, here skillfully coordinating vessel construction to promote the nation's defense.

Burke continued to address significant subjects with marked accomplishment, from the perspective of strategic leadership principles in *Army Leadership*, until the end of his six years as CNO. The Bay of Pigs operation to oust Cuban leader Fidel Castro in the spring of 1961 is a noteworthy exception to Burke's successful application of these principles. The political environment in this case was dramatically different than that to which Burke was accustomed. Burke had developed a solid relationship with President Eisenhower over five and one half years leading up to 1961. When President Kennedy was inaugurated, not only did Burke have a new commander in chief to learn to work with, but also new Secretaries of Defense and the Navy. The disruption in professional relationships exacerbated a situation that required every ounce of Burke's leadership. His

decisions to sign off on the plan to invade Cuba at several junctures imply, at least on the surface, a letdown in his application of leadership in nearly every area of strategic leadership skills and actions. It represents the sole blatant exception in the tenure of a man who seemed to instinctively understand leadership at the strategic level.

There was tremendous incentive and pressure to topple Castro at the time--Burke openly sought it and President Kennedy campaigned on it. There existed a strong perception that the situation insulted US prestige. Yet President Kennedy's goal of maintaining plausible deniability of US involvement was not realistic. Based on Burke's significant depth of experience it is highly unlikely that Burke failed to perceive this. He allowed his desire to be rid of Castro, coupled with his hope that if the operation went sour President Kennedy would allow the Navy to openly intervene, to overcome his objections to the practicability of the operation. The tragic results were a black eye that extended beyond the administration to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, marring an otherwise exceptional tenure as CNO for Admiral Burke.

Today several useful points can be gleaned from studying Burke's leadership as CNO and several areas can be highlighted that deserve further study. First, like any person Burke was stronger in some strategic leadership areas than others. He possessed exceptional conceptual skills, including a keen ability to grasp a situation quickly. Part of that ability was owed directly to the breadth and depth of his knowledge and experience, which provided accurate frames of reference to steer his judgment. This robust base was in no small part a natural result of the positions he was assigned and the unique circumstances he found himself in throughout his time in the Navy. Significant to note, however, is that the remainder of his broad knowledge base was self-developed through

personal research, reading, and study. His joining the Brookings Institute to increase his understanding of world economic and political issues is a good example. His thirst for knowledge and understanding of issues that did, or might, affect the Navy was insatiable.

Admiral Burke also proved particularly strong in interpersonal skills and influencing actions. Understanding that at the strategic level his ability to influence, vice simply order people, was a far more effective leadership tool allowed Burke to make the leap to influencing actions at the highest level of leadership. In an organization the size of the Navy Burke could not possibly oversee every item or program to completion. For things to get done quickly and correctly Burke understood communication and motivation were essential--individuals below him had to believe in the mission and in turn take ownership of a particular concern or program and see it through to successful completion. The tactful way in which he dealt with senior admirals bypassed in his promotion to CNO, as well as his efforts to communicate his vision and shape Navy culture are examples of his strength in these areas.

Burke also understood his role as strategic leader in the larger national context. He perceived his civilian superiors as successful leaders in the corporate world who sacrificed a lot in terms of compensation and corporate prestige to take positions in government. He also knew he was picked purposely to shake up the institution of the Navy and accelerate its transformation from an era of bullets and propeller driven airplanes to one of jets, guided missiles, and nuclear potential. Technology was advancing at a pace more rapidly than ever and the Navy could not afford to remain on its traditional, conservative course. Burke was “hired” to lead substantial institutional change--he did not disappoint civilian leadership.

Conversely, while Burke respected and appreciated his civilian superiors he did not let his respect inhibit speaking out on issues about which he felt strongly. Several times he challenged decisions and policies of his civilian chain of command and drew resulting fire on himself. For example, within days of taking over as CNO Burke felt compelled, after arguing his point to no avail with the Navy and Defense Secretaries, to take a manpower issue directly to the president. His fortitude was rewarded with the president's support on the issue but punished in turn by both chastisement from his commander in chief and by icy relations with the Secretaries for a time. Fortunately for Burke, before long it became clear to his civilian leaders that Burke was correct on the issue and their relationships with Burke eventually became stronger for the affair.

Burke's congressional testimony in which he expressed opposition to President Eisenhower's defense reorganization efforts in 1958 is another example of Burke's willingness to speak out. He did not make a public spectacle by seeking an audience but when questioned about his views he spoke honestly and presented his objections coherently. Burke's testimony caused considerable chagrin for the president but the point is that the president could trust Burke to speak truthfully and not be afraid to disagree. The testimony was nothing different from what Burke told the president in other settings. Their relationship depended on it. They could trust each other and the president was not afraid that Burke would merely speak what he thought the president wanted to hear. Burke fostered this same environment in the Navy. On his own staff he personally appointed a member to play "devil's advocate" on decisions Burked needed to make, a technique he learned during combat in the Pacific. This technique helped ensure that

Burke considered all angles to a problem and provided a form of checks and balances, ideally helping him avoid mistakes.

Burke was, in fact, willing to put his career on the line for issues he felt were important. His convictions in some instances nearly did end his career but Burke was willing to pay that price, if necessary. In effect this enhanced his influence. He could always be trusted to give the "straight scoop," regardless of personal consequences. He considered it his duty--an obligation to the greater good of the Navy and the nation. This perspective is further reason why his acquiescence on the plans leading up to the Bay of Pigs debacle seemed so out of character for the admiral. It remains an area deserving further research.

Several other areas of interest surfaced during research for this writing that were beyond the scope of this project but deserve additional attention. To begin, how did Burke perform as a strategic level leader in command of operational forces? This project addressed key organizational issues but the Chief of Naval Operations was also assigned operational control of naval forces up until President Eisenhower's Defense Reorganization Act went into effect in the summer of 1958. When this change occurred, operational control shifted to a direct link between the unified commander in the field and the Secretary of Defense, bypassing the service chiefs. For his first three years, however, Burke was in operational control. During those years the Navy responded to major crises in Lebanon, the Strait of Taiwan, and over the Suez Canal, to name a few. How did Burke perform in these instances from the perspective of a strategic leader?

A second area of interest involves the immediate and long-term fallout on the Navy and the CNO, in particular, from the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. What was the

relationship between President Kennedy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the remainder of his presidency? How was Burke's successor as CNO affected? What were the effects, if any, on the CNO and Navy for the Cuban Missile Crisis the following year? What were the effects on the Navy during the remainder of the 1960s?

A final area of interest for further research includes a study of ramifications from the shift to a military strategy of "flexible response" and Burke's contributions to that shift. How did the Navy vision and culture that Burke created impact the organization during the remainder of that decade and beyond? Answering these questions would round out the study of Burke's strategic leadership and provide additional depth in understanding his legacy.

In closing, why is it useful today to study a strategic naval leader who served nearly a half century ago? First, military officers need to be thinkers. Burke espoused this belief during his lifetime and *Army Leadership* espouses it today. Military leaders today face an environment devoid of a clear, traditional, large nation threat to US interests. This creates a large degree of ambiguity and difficulty for modern military leaders. Looking at ways past leaders managed ambiguity with success can help balance an individual's perspective and provide useful frames of reference.

Second, military history is useful in understanding circumstances that exist today. The strategic visions of early Cold War leaders and their ramifications are still being felt by the military today in terms of force capabilities, design, and structure.

Finally, Burke served an unprecedented three terms as CNO under two presidential administrations and was asked to serve a fourth term. Though one might argue this does not necessarily mean he was successful as a strategic leader, surely there

exist learning points from studying his leadership that can benefit current and future strategic leaders. The preponderance of issues during his watch were resolved successfully. Organizational issues did not become extinct but significant inroads were made in the Navy's vision, culture, mission and structure under his tutelage. Significant advances in the Navy's contribution to national defense and public awareness of those contributions can be attributed to his leadership efforts as well. The bottom line is that Admiral Burke served with distinction at the highest levels of military service, the pinnacle that most active military officers today still have before them. Studying the events, background, successes and failures of individuals at that level will help those still in the ranks to understand a little better how to achieve success themselves. No cookie-cutter template exists to guarantee success but evaluating past experiences opens the door for a broader understanding of the world service members operate in and aids development of wise decision-making. Any movement in that direction constitutes a measure of success both for the individual and for the service.

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[1]Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington: Army Press, 1999), 7-22.

[2]John R. Wadleigh, "William Birrell Franke," in *American Secretaries of the Navy*, Volume 2 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 895.

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